

AN
ORATION

PRONOUNCED

At BRIDGEWATER, JULY 4, 1804,

IN COMMEMORATION

OF THE

ANNIVERSARY OF

American Independence.

By HECTOR C.

MEMBER OF THE MASSACHUSETTS ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

They bawPd for freedom in their senseless mood,
Yet still revolt, when truth would set them free ;
Licence they mean, when they cry LIBERTY ;
For who loves that, must first be wise and good.

MILTON.

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AN ORATION.

THE establishment of the **AMERICAN REPUBLIC**, commences a new and important epoch in the history of nations; and her declaration of **INDEPENDENCE**, is the fairest page in that instructive Volume. The abhorrence of oppression in the Colonists, and the desire of power, seconded by a factious spirit in a few of the statesmen of the mother-country, were the original source of the event, which we have this day convened to celebrate. Pure be our joys on this anniversary, consecrated to the Genius of Liberty!—Unimbittered be our reflections by the past,—not depressed by the present,—nor too much elevated by the future prospects of our country!

TRAVEL round the globe, and we shall find recorded in the annals of every civilized nation, a few distinguished events, which their citizens have annually commemorated with feelings of exquisite sensibility. The triumphs of their patriotism have not been rendered less amiable by yielding to the emotions of humanity. Their carols of

freedom have not sounded less musically sweet, by being uttered by the same voice, which proclaimed their griefs. And their national glory has not shone with less radiance by being inscribed on the same column, which was designed to perpetuate the memory of their heroes. Animated by their example, we this day pay a tribute of gratitude to the memory of those, who heroically fought in defence of American Liberty and Independence, and "resigned their lives amidst the joys of conquest." Their martial achievements are a mausoleum of this military fame, more durable than the pyramids ; and their deaths give a sable hue to the Revolution, which time may soften, but can never obliterate. Their names add splendor to the imperishable scroll of glory, and the altars of liberty are made more sacred by their blood : For the trophies of victory, they receive the tears of affection, and the merited eulogies of a grateful people. To feelings of sympathy, there is a luxury in grief ; and compassion delights to mingle its sighs with the deep sobs of affliction.

THE distresses of a nation in her manly struggles for freedom, will extend through every enlightened region of the globe, and be commiserated where pity feels for the miseries of man. Those of AMERICA, during her Revolutionary war, were too poignant not to be felt, and too sa-

ered not to be revered. They were not the mere sportive productions of fiction, which a *sigh* had wafted into existence, and a *smile* could have erased forever. But they were national calamities, which posterity will lament, but cannot censure. They will cling to the recollection till the soft energies of the soul are no more felt. They agonized the breast of America, and dried up the sources of consolation, for she knew that the tears she dropt upon the bosom of the mother-country, "fell on marble." The mad hand of pitiless power pressed heavily upon her; and oppression, excited "by an unwarrantable stretch of prerogative," was inventing detestable expedients to eternize her misery. Her moans sighed in every breeze, imaginary shackles floated in the visions of the night, and the morning waked her to witness new encroachments of usurpation. She was insulted with the mockery of political mercy, and treated as a beast of burthen, whose feelings were blunted by stripes.

RECIPROCAL criminations, provoked by jealousies and insults, had produced enmities not to be effaced by conciliatory measures. The distance of ocean which divided the countries, was not greater than the difference of their political opinions. What was solicited in the humble tone of affection and humanity, was denied in the stern voice of disdainful authority. Petitions

were answered by silent contempt ; and injuries and aggressions multiplied without a hope of redress. Wearied in the fruitless search of pacific negociation, *remonstrances* yielded to resistance, and war was commissioned, like the fires of heaven, to spread horror and desolation through the continent.

THE history of the American Revolution, is so familiar to every mind, that a recurrence to it on this occasion, is unnecessary. It was a contest between *power* and *right*, where party asperity embittered by the remembrance of violated friendship, was wrought to madness in the execution of its designs.

THE perils of that convulsive crisis, which, under different circumstances, would have abated the ardour of enterprize, served to invigorate the energies of our country. Our hardy yeomanry were not appalled by the smoaking ruins of our conflagrated towns.—They were not deterred from the fixed purpose of their souls, by the martial pomp and discipline of their assailants, nor by the unaccustomed fatigues and hardships of a military life. Under the auspices of LIBERTY, they heard the signal of encounter without dismay ; and fearless of the impending carnage, braved the fury of the battle. They abhorred oppression ; and preferred an honorable death in the

contest for *freedom*, to the inglorious purchase of their lives by an unconditional surrender of their *rights*. The liberty, which they sought and obtained, was consistent with the nature and principles of civil society. It was a liberty capable of conferring the greatest good, and procuring the most permanent enjoyment. It was guarded from licentiousness; and under its divine panoply, the timorous forgot their fears, and death was disarmed of its terrors. It was roused into action by an impulse flowing from the purest principles in the human heart. They inherited it as their birth-right, and it was repugnant to every principle which dignifies and ennobles man, that they should so far forget to respect themselves, as not to assert their *INDEPENDENCE* with their liberty. It was the dictate of wisdom, and the *declaration* was expressed in the strong, energetic language of freemen.

THE Genius of Liberty, which conducted them through the disasters of an exterminating war, presided in their infant councils, and led them to the establishment of our *FEDERAL REPUBLIC*. The constitution of Government which they adopted, was of the Republican form, founded in justice, guarded against anarchy and oppression, and unincumbered with religious tests. By prudently separating the legislative from the executive power; it produced a balance of au-

thority essential to public prosperity, and the liberty of individuals. And the independency of its judiciary, was a wise provision for the impartial execution of the laws. A constitution, approaching so near perfection, claims your veneration and affection; and will receive the approbation and eulogiums of the wise and good, till its fair form has been mutilated and defaced by the restless hand of innovation.

On the present occasion, it is not intended to bestow encomiums on the administration of WASHINGTON, which derived more glory from its effects than it could from my poor pittance of praise. The increase of individual and national prosperity from a sudden extension of commerce; the rapid population of our country, which penetrated deep into those boundless wilds of the North and West; the progressive advancement of the arts and manufactures; the dignity supported abroad, and the peace enjoyed at home, are evidences of a mild, just, and equitable administration.

FAC-TION had hitherto been restrained from the execution of its intentions for want of an object upon which it could wreak its malice. Those who had been averse to our Independence, and were afterwards opposed to the adoption of our constitution, were bold and clamorous. Expe-

clients were not sought in vain to excite the fears
 of the irresolute, and the suspicions of the weak :
 To mislead the ignorant, to encourage the base
 and profligate, and to inflame the seditious. It
 required no political sagacity, or any extraordina-
 ry depth of erudition, to invent and propagate a
 catalogue of imaginary grievances. Those who
 had not the knowledge of facts to contradict or
 refute bold and dogmatical assertions, urged with-
 out proof or argument, were told their liberties
 were invaded, and their rights violated. They
 were told of an impudent and daring aristocracy
 in the national legislature, who intended to aggran-
 dize themselves and enslave the people. They
 were told of British influence, knowing that the
 leaders of the supposed faction, would be equally
 loathed, abhorred and detested, as men carrying
 contagion in their pockets, and spreading pesti-
 lence with their breath. They were told that
 GENET was an angel of light, sent by the indivi-
 sible Republic of France, to save them from the
tyranny and oppression of WASHINGTON. Would
 to God this was the language of fiction ! But it
 has issued from every prostituted press, every
 anarchical paper, and jacobinical club in the con-
 tinent. There were those who had the malignity
 to vilify the name of WASHINGTON while he
 lived, and to shed " crocodile tears " over his
 tomb, when his immortal spirit had ascended to
 the paradise above. The government, in their

language, was proceeding beyond all sufferance, the patience of the people was exhausted, and their indignation could not longer be restrained. But where is the solitary instance that the rights of property were not respected? In what transaction of his public life is there proof of a want of integrity? By what legislative act, which received his approving signature, was the constitution violated?

DURING the whole of his administration, jealousy was vigilant and active. There was not a measure adopted, however calculated to preserve the dignity, and increase the prosperity of the country, which escaped the invidious scrutiny of the restless demons of misrule. They heard the moans of expiring liberty in the mission of an envoy extraordinary to his Britannic Majesty. But was the cultivation of peace with sincerity, and the vindication of our rights with firmness, an attack upon the constitution, and fatal to liberty? Were the interest of America, her agriculture, manufactures and navigation to be sacrificed to the mean and pitiful motive of exalting one nation by humbling another? Were not the poor, by the influence of misrepresentations, as much alarmed by a tax upon chariots, snuff, and spirits, as if they had been prohibited the use of plates, knives and forks? Sedition blowed its horn, and the indigent were exhorted to defend their liber-

ty, assert their rights, and check the corruptions of a violent and arbitrary administration. At this distracted moment, when the kingdoms of Europe cast an anxious look towards our shore, and trembled for the fate of our nation; when it was expected the country would have marshalled all its host in support of the palladium of liberty, the combustibles took fire, and exploded in a *Pittsburg mob*, armed in defence of whisky.

“Parturient montes: nascetur ridiculus mus.”

POPULAR Governments will always be liable to similar impositions and inconveniences. However amiable and captivating their appearance may be in theory, the test of experience will discover their defects; and the only safe and successful correction of the evil, is by multiplying laws without demolishing the original compact.

TIME will not permit even a summary recital of all the difficulties and obstacles which opposed themselves to the administration of WASHINGTON. These are topics fruitful in incidents for the display of historical description, and unfold a tale of facts which no confession could ex-
piate, no repentance atone. From this day, I would persuade my fellow-citizens, to banish all remembrance of those disgraceful transactions, concerted by Irish emigrants, and the partizans

of the terrible Republic. They have been clearly stated to the public in a language which made all inferior enormities pass unnoticed, and their consequences have been sufficiently understood, by being severely felt. I would exhort them to bury in eternal oblivion, the recollection of the vile and scurrilous calumny with which the best and greatest of characters was aspersed by the hired assassins of public reputation. Let us pass them, though insolent, as the unmeaning sallies of folly and rashness. Were I disposed to perpetuate the disgrace of my country, by contrasting their *vices* with his *virtues*, the discussion would exceed the limits of this discourse. I should appeal to the good sense and understanding of this audience, whose consciences are the records of *truth*, and speak in a voice as strong as justice, and sublime as heaven, for the evidences of his integrity, his impartiality and wisdom, in selecting appropriate characters for the departments of state, and his indefatigable zeal in promoting the happiness and prosperity of the people.

AFTER eight years of unparalleled prosperity, the reigns of government were committed to the guidance of President ADAMS. The moment appeared to call into action all the energies of the secret enemies of WASHINGTON, who had not heretofore had the effrontery openly to attack

what they had clandestinely condemned. The early, active and decided part he had taken in the Revolution, afforded no protection against the malignity of an incensed faction. He was declared to be the advocate of *monarchy*, for having inflexibly pursued the political tenets, and approved the decisive measures of his illustrious predecessor. But had he so far forgotten the dignity of his office, as to have openly professed himself friendly to the selfish views of party, he might have been justly suspected of being friendly to a dissolution of our confederacy, and inimical to republicanism. Who would have been his warm admirers had his Public Addresses been fraught with reproaches against the preceeding administration? Who would have complimented his talents had they been prostituted to the servile labors of a sycophant? Who would have approved of his conduct, had he taken a foreigner from a mob, armed against government, and conferred upon him one of the highest and most important offices of the nation? Those who had the spirit to resent an insult, would have found it as difficult to restrain their indignation, as it is to arrest yon bright orb of day in his course. Would his attachment to the holy oracles of divine truth, received stronger confirmation, had he invited to this country a professed infidel, who had written and published his impious strictures upon the sublime doctrines of Revelation? Had he removed from office the compatriots of WASHINGTON,

who had jeopardized their lives in defence of freedom and the Independence we this day celebrate, would not our reproaches have found utterance? Had he commenced his administration with the civic profession of "restoring harmony to social intercourse," while he was triumphantly leading a faction, which was sowing deep the seeds of discord, would he not have met the scorn and execrations of an insulted people? But he is above the reach of private insinuations, and such interrogations will neither disturb his peace of mind, or the tranquillity of his conscience.

DEMOCRACY commenced its reign, with the present administration, "in the full tide of successful experiment," and if it has not preserved a uniform consistency of character, it was when its political *theory* was not at variance with its *practice*. If the *professions*, not the *conduct* of men, were the criterion of *integrity*, who would have the arrogance to arraign the executive of the nation? Was his attachment to the people to be measured by his expressions, who would not admire his condescending greatness? Was the gratifying of political antipathies, by vacating offices, during the recess of the Senate, "a political intolerance," in the chief magistrate, "as despotic as wicked?" In whom has "oppressed humanity," found a warmer friend, or "œconomy in the public expence," a more eloquent ad-

vocate? Was not the repeal of the law for establishing the Circuit Courts of the United States, a formidable “bulwark against anti-republican tendencies?” and was not this measure the legitimate nursling of President JEFFERSON? If in the earnestness of his zeal for the advancement of Republicanism, he has exceeded the bounds prescribed by moderation, he has not advanced those sentiments and adopted those measures, which would entitle him to the approbation and confidence of the friends of WASHINGTON. The whole of his administration has been marked by a peculiarity of features so strong and expressive, as not to admit of a *possibility* of doubt, in what school he was taught his political theories. If he has there acquired talents, which supply the place of morality;—a firmness equivalent to virtue,—and moderation and discretion as influential as religion, with safety he will “steer the vessel in which we are all embarked, amidst the conflicting elements of a troubled world, and the agonizing spasms of infuriated man.”

GOVERNMENT cannot long be supported by the spirit of faction. Success generally gives a momentary impulse, but it is soon lost for want of a *unity* of design, which is inconsistent with the fluctuations of party turbulence. The loaves and fishes cannot be distributed, with a liberal profusion, to every hungry mouth; and ambi-

tion being disappointed in its expectations will attempt to acquire by *division*, the promotion it had lost by *union*. With views so discordant, they form a heterogeneous mass of mild and turbulent, of peaceable and rebellious, of condescending friends and open enemies, which no political menstruum can unite. And when competitions have arisen in the party, which has brought an administration into power, the division will be subversive of the government. Such has been uniformly the fate of the ruling parties in France. BRISOT and ROBESPIERRE, and TALLIEN and BARBES, successively fell by the same faction by which they rose. And may not BONAPARTE and the philosopher of Monticello, expect to experience a similar "destiny?" It is no consolation that government is strong, successful and energetic; that foreign kings, and sovereigns, and potentates bow to its sceptre, and tremble at the terror of its power; and that armies and navies are obedient to its commands, if the subject draws out a miserable and melancholy existence under the constant dread of assassination, robbery and massacre, the fatal effects of party asperity.

THOSE evils which attach themselves to Republican Governments, are more easily prevented, than corrected. The defect is in the people, not the constitution. Their inconstancy, their passions and vices, are beyond the reach of polit-

ical speculations, and they are seldom rendered wiser or better by any changes of the original form of their government. A general diffusion of the knowledge of the fundamental maxims of natural law, morality, and religion is a more certain preventative, than any alteration of the constitution can be, of the mischief which befalls a Republic. This is a source of obedience from principle. The advancement of the sciences facilitates the progress of truth, and is more essential to the preservation of Republican, than of Monarchial or Despotic Governments. A free people, thus enjoying the means of education, are borne above the dread of faction, and a quick sense of injuries protects them from the insolence of power. They are taught to distinguish the genuine principles of *liberty*, from the fallacious profession of a dissembling patriotism, which, by exciting false hopes, and false alarms, hurries its deluded votaries into riots and insurrections. Anarchy has dignified with the name of *liberty*, the privilege to calumniate the virtuous, to plunder the rich, to assassinate the honest, to guillotine the friends of order, and to exterminate morality and religion. But the venerable fathers of our country, were not the servile worshippers of this Parisian goddess. Their liberty was not the ebullitions of a disordered imagination overheated by exaggerated aggressions; the delirious dreams of fanaticism, sanctified by the whinings of bigotry,

nor the senseless bawlings of modern democracy, which has opened the sluices of infidelity. The constitution of government which they gave us was friendly to civil liberty, and was designed for a wise and virtuous people. Its existence depends upon the general diffusion of knowledge and religion among the people, and the cultivation of those manners and habits, which characterized our ancestors.

A REMEMBRANCE of the ardent piety, the dignified and exalted virtues, and the unquenchable love of liberty, which eminently distinguished the founders of our Republic ;—a remembrance of the care and zeal which they manifested in promoting and disseminating knowledge and inculcating morality, is decent and commendable on this anniversary. Such reflections will prove an incentive of emulation, and a testimonial of gratitude for the important services of our ancestors. They will excite in our minds sensations of elevated pleasure, enkindle the fire of valour, awaken the warmest patriotism, and illumine the path through which the enlightened sages of our country arrived at the citadel of glory.

“ REMEMBER, O my friends, the laws, the rights,
The generous PLAN of POWER deliver'd down,
From age to age, by your renown'd forefathers,
(So dearly bought, the price of so much blood ;) .
O let it never perish in your hands !

But piously transmit it to your children.
Do thou, great LIBERTY, inspire our souls,
And make our *lives* in thy possession happy,
Or our *death* glorious in thy just possession."

